FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ THRILLER

Baden-Powell's Beads: London

Paul D. Parsons
CreateSpace (Apr 11, 2013)
Softcover $15.00 (290pp)
978-1-4825-4694-1

A fast-paced narrative, *Baden-Powell's Beads* by Paul D. Parsons, is a history-based adventure with a solid premise and plenty of drama and conflict.

In this second volume of his "Beads Series," Parsons builds fiction on fact. Baden-Powell, British army general and Boy Scouts founder, did give beads to the original scoutmasters—carved wooden beads the general reportedly had taken from a Zulu chief during the Boer War. Set in the present day, this fictional story, which began in Memphis, Tennessee, in the previous installment, is driven by the desire of a mysterious group to possess the beads.

In Book Two, the action moves to Gilwell Park outside London, England, one of the original venues for scout training. Parsons transfers the antagonist role from the Zulus (of Book One) to Arabs here, mainly in the character of Ahmed bin Ibrahim, an early-nineteenth-century explorer. According to the backstory, Ibrahim led a group into the wilds, and the beads were lost when Casati, a fellow traveler carrying the beads and charged with a mysterious mission, was killed by a Gaboon viper.

The narrative goes on to trace the history of the Baden-Powell beads said to have been glimpsed inside the Ark of the Covenant, after which "they made their way into ancient Egypt, passing through the hands of some of the Pharaohs and ultimately buried in a secret place, guarded by dedicated men. We think Napoleon, on his march across northern Africa, unearthed and carried them back to Europe."

That historical tidbit is offered by Sir Wadley Crestmore when he meets Dr. David Freeman and his girlfriend, Pam Blanchard. Freeman was given a bead in Memphis during an adventure that is chronicled in the first volume. Now he's been summoned to London by Crestmore. But Crestmore and Blanchard have secrets, and thus the narrative lurches into violence and treachery orchestrated by Raoul Livingston, a Scotland Yard administrator with Arab heritage. Also in play is Cheri Hassan, first-class femme fatale. Freeman and company have on their side Freeman's college roommate and now Homeland Security agent Patrick Dartson, along with Dartson's cohort, the appealing tech-wizard Adnan Fazeph.

The author's imagined history makes for a great plot, and he also assembles a cast of solidly believable characters, with the exception of Hassan, who seems too much like a super-villain from a James Bond adventure. The major flaw in *Baden-Powell's Beads* is that readers must cope with insufficient backstory. Parsons's saga will work better if read from the beginning of the series, especially considering that he has plans for four volumes.

Parsons uses a good choice of settings, London, to drive the narrative of the historical intrigue. He also handles dialogue decently, and there are minimal errors in grammar and syntax. There's a bit of romance, but only in the action-hero motif. Many readers will be surprised by the author's choice of who dies and who lives to fight another day.

With new villains entering late in the story, Parsons nicely sets the scene for the third volume in the series.
GARY PRESLEY (May 28, 2013)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have his/her book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Review make no guarantee that the author will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.